

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

□ 1400

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

ENSURING RELIABLE AIR SERVICE IN AMERICAN SAMOA

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 276) a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to ensure reliable air service in American Samoa, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 276

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. RELIABLE AIR SERVICE IN AMERICAN SAMOA.

Section 40109(g) of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by striking subparagraph (C) and inserting the following:

“(C) review the exemption at least every 30 days (or, in the case of exemptions that are necessary to provide and sustain air transportation in American Samoa between the islands of Tutuila and Manu’a, at least every 180 days), to ensure that the unusual circumstances that established the need for the exemption still exist.”; and

(2) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following:

“(3) RENEWAL OF EXEMPTIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the Secretary may renew an exemption (including renewals) under this subsection for not more than 30 days.

“(B) EXCEPTION.—An exemption that is necessary to provide and sustain air transportation in American Samoa between the islands of Tutuila and Manu’a, may be renewed for not more than 180 days.

“(4) CONTINUATION OF EXEMPTIONS.—An exemption may continue for not more than 5 days after the unusual circumstances that established the need for the exemption cease.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 276.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 276, as amended. This bill will improve transportation in American Samoa by making air service between its islands more reliable and predictable.

Specifically, the bill streamlines a burdensome Federal regulatory process that artificially inhibits economic growth and jobs on the islands. The Senate unanimously passed similar legislation in the last Congress, and I am hopeful they will join with us this year in addressing this issue.

I want to thank the sponsor of the bill, the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN), for her tireless efforts on behalf of her constituents and for working with us to bring a bill that benefits so many of them to the floor.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 276.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 276, as amended, introduced by the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN), which will ensure reliable air service into American Samoa.

American Samoa is situated in the center of the South Pacific, about 2,500 miles south of Hawaii. Its nearest neighboring islands are at least 500 miles away, and the territory is more than 7,000 miles from where we stand today.

This remote location already makes export and travel difficult and costly. Complicating matters more is the fact that the current cabotage laws prohibit foreign air carriers from carrying passengers between the islands, except in certain emergency situations.

The Department of Transportation has authority to issue waivers in such emergency cases, but the waivers are good for only 30 days. A foreign airline that is otherwise fit to provide service between American Samoa's islands is, therefore, forced to apply monthly for a waiver.

H.R. 276 would remove this burden by permitting DOT to grant the cabotage waiver for up to 6 months. This change ensures that domestic air transportation is provided and sustained between the islands, benefitting both the people and the economy.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the

gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN).

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank Chairman SHUSTER, Subcommittee Chairman LOBIONDO, Ranking Members DEFAZIO and LARSEN, and their staff for the effort and work they put in to quickly see this measure through this committee. They do an excellent job, and it is always encouraging to work with such bright people. I also want to thank Leader MCCARTHY and his staff for their assistance in getting this measure to the floor. I look forward to working under their leadership to bring prosperity to the American people, including those in the territories.

Mr. Speaker, the people of American Samoa desperately need improvement to their access to reliable transportation between the islands of Tutuila and Manu’a. The remote Manu’a islands are losing residents at an alarming pace, mostly due to the lack of reliable transportation; and it is causing a great hardship on the families and businesses who reside on these islands which lie 60 miles from the main island of Tutuila.

Also, the lack of reliable transportation poses a severe health risk to those who need emergency medical care, as the only hospital in American Samoa is in Tutuila.

My bill, H.R. 276, will help alleviate this issue by easing some of the burdensome red tape causing the issue, and I look forward to seeing it signed into law by the President.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLON).

Mr. SABLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 276, a bill to provide more reliable air service to the people of American Samoa for air travel within American Samoa.

The Northern Mariana Islands are similar to American Samoa in many ways. Although the large majority of our population resides on Saipan, I have also several thousand constituents residing on the islands Tinian and Rota. We are fortunate that air travel between these islands is possible with the presence of commercial air travel.

Unfortunately, in American Samoa, there are no U.S. carriers operating a route between Tutuila and Manu’a. So Polynesian Airlines, based out of Samoa, is the only carrier operating that route.

H.R. 276, introduced by my good friend and colleague, the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN), presents a commonsense approach to cut red tape and allow regular flights to continue between these islands. It would help the people of American Samoa conduct business, visit relatives, and access health care.

It has my full support, and I ask the House to pass this commonsense legislation.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.